

Katrina/Rita

The 5th Commemoration

August 29, 2010

September 24, 2010



FEMA



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Table of Contents

Opening Letter	3
Individual Assistance	4
Public Assistance	6
Hazard Mitigation.....	8
Environmental & Historic Preservation.....	10
Thank You.....	12
Recovery in Progress	14

Unprecedented Disaster, Unprecedented Recovery

Five years have passed since Hurricane Katrina struck Louisiana, causing the worst natural disaster in our country's history. This was followed less than a month later by Hurricane Rita, compounding an already catastrophic situation.

The devastation caused by these storms had tremendous impact on the political, business and social sectors of Louisiana. As a result, some areas may not fully recover for a decade or more. For many Louisiana residents, Aug. 29, 2005, marks a distinct break in time, so much so that five years after the fact, current time is referred to simply as "post-Katrina."

Throughout this post-Katrina period, FEMA has remained dedicated to helping Louisiana families and communities recover. To date, in partnership with and in support of the state of Louisiana, we have provided more than \$15.2 billion in assistance. We maintain our steadfast commitment to the resilient survivors of Louisiana as they continue along the path to full recovery.

So, on the 5th anniversary of this unprecedented event, we can say that a lot has been accomplished, but we can also say that a lot remains to be done. FEMA is committed to being here for as long as it takes to fully recover, and we're working to do so in a way that builds, sustains and improves south Louisiana's capability to protect against future hazards.



Mike Karl
FEMA Louisiana Recovery Office Interim Director

Individual Assistance

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were catastrophic storms that left hundreds of thousands of individuals homeless and unable to meet their basic needs. FEMA's Individual Assistance (IA) section, through the Individuals and Households Program, funded up to \$26,200 per household to help with housing needs and necessary expenses. Other needs assistance helped replace essential items such as clothing, furniture and vehicles. IA also helped fund disaster unemployment assistance, crisis counseling and disaster-related medical, dental and funeral expenses.

Following the hurricanes, IA opened 110 Disaster Recovery Centers. These one-stop centers enabled residents to more easily obtain information about assistance available through various federal, state and voluntary agencies.

The storms caused a massive housing shortage and initially, many first responders and some homeowners and renters were sheltered in hotels and cruise ships. Residents were also housed in rental resources and hotels across the United States. IA provided monthly rental assistance and placed temporary housing units—travel trailers, park models and mobile homes—at various sites across the state. Ninety-nine percent of these residents have now moved on to more permanent housing.

FEMA's temporary housing program ended May 1, 2009. Nearly 92,000 families were once housed, and currently, fewer than 800 households still reside in these temporary units. With its state partner, formerly the Louisiana Recovery Authority and now the Office of Community Development, IA has worked diligently to help remaining families find permanent housing solutions. To date, approximately \$5.8 billion has been spent to assist Katrina/Rita survivors, including \$4.2 billion in housing assistance and \$1.6 billion in other needs assistance.

Relocation Assistance

The widespread devastation of hurricanes Katrina and Rita forced many Gulf Coast families to temporarily abandon their pre-disaster homes and move to new locations within or beyond their home states. In an effort to help these residents come home, FEMA implemented a reimbursement program that provided relocation assistance of up to \$4,000 per household. Travel expenses such as air, train and bus fare and/or a rental vehicle were fully covered. Limited lodging costs were also provided, depending on the distance between the two residences. Commercially rented equipment for hauling furniture and commercially purchased moving materials or moving services—including liability insurance and taxes—were all covered by relocation assistance funds. Through this innovative recovery program, which was extended twice, many Louisiana families were able to return home.



FEMA funded travel that helped many Louisiana families return home following Katrina.





FEMA caseworkers assisted thousands of people at Disaster Recovery Centers following Katrina.



Caseworkers and Voluntary Agency Liaisons

Following any disaster, particularly one of catastrophic proportions, there will be disaster survivors who lack the resources to recover. After hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA established 110 Disaster Recovery Centers in Louisiana (and many in other states) where survivors could go to receive information on what resources and benefits were available to them. The disaster survivors were assigned caseworkers in an effort to assess their disaster-related needs and help them develop a goal-oriented plan for recovery. FEMA caseworkers helped hundreds of thousands of households by organizing and coordinating information on available resources that matched their disaster-related needs.

Along with caseworkers, FEMA deployed specialists known as Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs). VALs served as a major resource for caseworkers as they were experts at matching a specific family's needs with the appropriate agency resource. FEMA VALs traveled throughout disaster areas to assess survivors' ongoing needs and promote the creation of Long Term Recovery Committees. These committees pooled the resources of federal, state and non-profit agencies, and through collaboration and coordination, minimized duplication of effort and maximized the resources available to survivors.

Temporary Housing Units

As a result of the enormous damage to housing and the overall infrastructure, the housing mission for hurricanes Katrina and Rita was the largest to date. More than 92,000 households were placed in temporary housing units—travel trailers, park models and mobile homes—throughout the state of Louisiana. These units were located on private properties, at industrial sites and in commercial parks. In addition, FEMA built 111 group sites that sheltered more than 8,800 households.

FEMA maintained the temporary housing units throughout their use, while caseworkers continued to work with disaster survivors to help them achieve more permanent housing solutions. With all of the group sites now closed and restored and less than 800 households remaining in FEMA units, IA continues to work closely with the state, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and non-profits to assist the remaining families transition out of temporary housing.



In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, almost 92,000 households were placed in temporary housing units until more permanent housing solutions could be located.



Public Assistance

Over this past decade, 1,112 disasters across the United States have been presidentially declared as eligible to receive federal aid under FEMA's Public Assistance Program. In support of rebuilding infrastructures devastated by these disasters, since 2000, FEMA has provided more than \$37.8 billion overall in public assistance grants. Nearly 25 percent of this funding—\$8.9 billion—went toward approximately 22,500 Katrina and Rita recovery projects throughout Louisiana.

While such comparable data makes the magnitude of Katrina and Rita's impact on Louisiana slightly more comprehensible, the state's 1,107 Katrina and Rita public assistance applicants may attest that the full enormity of the destruction and the massive recovery efforts that have followed can only best be grasped at ground level.

More than 7,700 buildings in Louisiana were destroyed by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and today, more than 83 percent of them are either rebuilt or currently under construction. The restoration of these facilities has significant impacts across all public sectors. For example, more than \$2.8 billion has been funded for K-12 public schools and universities in Louisiana.

In New Orleans, our partners at the Recovery School District are moving diligently toward their goal of creating a 21st century learning environment throughout the city. In Phase 1 of their Master Plan, six state-of-the-art schools with a combined capacity to educate 3,850 students are complete, of which four—Langston Hughes Elementary School, Lake Area High School, Andrew Wilson Elementary School and L.B. Landry High School—are officially open and operating. Additionally, 17 more schools will be built during Phase 1, and their recovery progress ranges from planning and design stages to nearing completion.

As with the Recovery School District, FEMA has worked to not only help rebuild public facilities throughout Louisiana, but has also aimed while doing so to best meet applicants' post-Katrina recovery needs. Many applicants, as the following stories will highlight, have greatly benefited from flexible assistance options such as 406 mitigation measures as well as improved and alternate project opportunities.

406 Mitigation

Public assistance grants obligated as "406 mitigation" provide cost-effective construction measures to enhance facilities' abilities to resist similar damages in the future. This funding helps restore damaged facilities beyond their pre-disaster design. To date, 782 Katrina and Rita recovery projects throughout Louisiana have incorporated some form of FEMA-funded 406 mitigation into their restoration.

For example, Tulane University in New Orleans is utilizing nearly \$16 million in FEMA 406 mitigation funds to construct two additional levels at their Howard Tilton Memorial Library. During Hurricane Katrina, archives stored in the library's basement were severely damaged by floodwaters. To mitigate against similar future losses, Tulane plans to elevate these archives, as well as systems crucial to their daily operations, from their basement to the two, new higher floors. When this project is completed, it too will serve as another instance in which FEMA has supported rebuilding measures to help applicants avert repetitive damages to their properties.



Tulane University's Howard Tilton Memorial Library





Construction of South Cameron's Consolidated Educational Facility

Improved Projects

Recovery projects may be approved for FEMA funding as “improved projects” when applicants choose to make additional improvements to their facilities while restoring their pre-disaster functions. Such funding flexibility allows applicants, if they wish, to upgrade the design of their facilities, expand or increase the capacity of their facilities, or relocate or consolidate several existing facilities into a new one.

So far, in post-Katrina Louisiana, FEMA has funded 223 recovery projects as improved projects. In the southwestern corner of the state, for example, Cameron Parish’s School Board decided to combine South Cameron Elementary and High schools into one educational facility instead of rebuilding two, new separate facilities. Since the combined facility maintains both of the schools’ educational functions and provides similar size capacities, FEMA determined the school qualified for public assistance funding as an improved project.

Alternate Projects

Another rebuilding option under FEMA’s public assistance program is “alternate projects,” where applicants can move funding slated for one recovery project to another project. Applicants request an alternate project when they decide it is not in the best interest of the public to restore the particular facility at hand. Instead, they determine it would be more beneficial for the public to utilize eligible federal funding for that facility toward another post-Katrina recovery project.

For instance, the Blood Center’s Administration Building in New Orleans was damaged during Hurricane Katrina. Rather than use FEMA funding to restore the facility, the Blood Center requested to purchase a new blood mobile. FEMA approved this alternate project because the new blood mobile better suited the Blood Center’s post-Katrina needs.

Likewise, in St. Tammany Parish, Slidell Memorial Hospital wanted to use eligible FEMA repair funds for two of their Katrina-damaged buildings—a Data Transcription Building and an X-Ray Medical Records Storage Building—toward the construction of a 53,655 square foot parking lot. FEMA approved the hospital’s request as an alternate project, allowing funding to be used for the demolitions of the two buildings, removal of landscaping, drainage excavation and construction of the new paved parking lot. Once fully completed, the parking lot will help meet the post-Katrina growth needs of the medical facility.



The Blood Center’s Blood Mobile



Slidell Memorial Hospital’s New Parking Lot

Hazard Mitigation

Hurricane Katrina reminded our country of Mother Nature's unpredictability and strength—two things that, when combined, can lead to mass destruction. While technology thankfully gives us a heads-up regarding projected paths of potential storms, Mother Nature still has the upper hand in determining the final destination and force of their impacts. For this reason, among many, it is crucial that communities and residents prepare to the best of their abilities for future, unknown disasters.

Nevertheless, because elements of uncertainty are at play, preparing for such things can seem like a challenging task. To assist in this undertaking, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation department has worked with individuals and state and local officials throughout Louisiana to help mitigate the potential dangers that future storms may present.

Overall, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) has helped many of those impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita rebuild stronger by providing grants to communities and state agencies for projects that aim to potentially save lives and protect properties. Such HMGP projects are chosen by the state, approved by FEMA and include elevating houses or public buildings to safer levels, creating a redundancy system for critical records and public documents, adding hurricane shutters to existing structures or acquiring and removing flood-prone properties from floodplains.

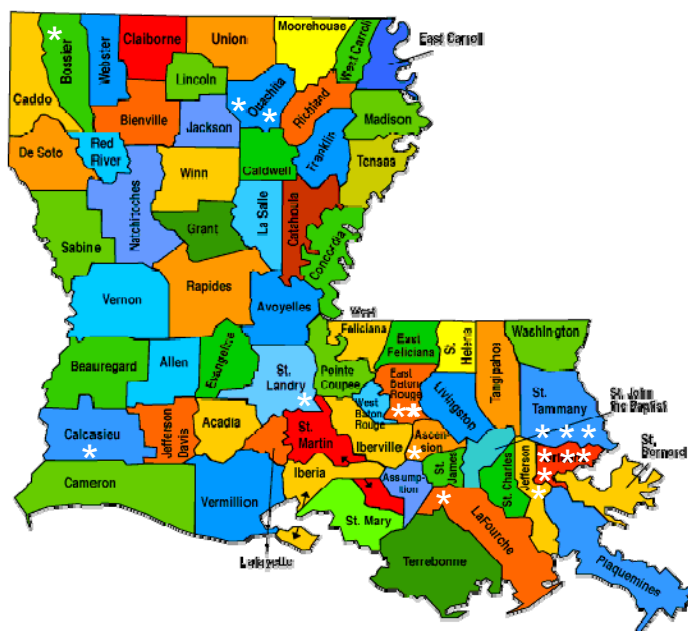
Specifically, in response to the 2005 hurricanes, FEMA has made available \$1.47 billion in HMGP grant funding to the state of Louisiana, of which \$524.1 million has already been obligated for 379 mitigation projects. Funded projects include the elevations of approximately 1,006 properties; the acquisition by parishes of 327 previously flooded properties to be turned into green space; and the retrofitting of 297 properties, making them stronger by adding mitigation elements such as hurricane shutters, roof tie downs and shatter-resistant windows.

Through such mitigation efforts, FEMA will continue to support Louisiana's recovery and help safeguard her future.

Hazard Mitigation Plans

FEMA mitigation has also been involved in the development of hazard mitigation plans for communities throughout Louisiana. A requirement to qualify for the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is that the state and communities must have an approved hazard mitigation plan. When hurricanes Katrina and Rita made landfall, there were only four jurisdictions, one being the state of Louisiana, with approved plans. Since then, FEMA has made over \$23.5 million available for communities to develop and update their hazard mitigation plans. To date, there are 81 jurisdictions with approved plans.

(Right) All 64 parishes have approved mitigation plans. Additionally, as indicated on the map with asterisks, there are 17 other entities throughout the state with approved plans.





DFIRM Map Example

Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps

FEMA has been developing and implementing new flood maps to allow residents to make smarter decisions about rebuilding. After issuing Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) to the coastal parishes by the end of 2009, FEMA has been holding open houses and technical workshops and attending city council meetings to educate and inform residents on the importance of the new maps. DFIRMs have now been issued in 50 parishes, and six parishes have adopted their DFIRMs to date. The first of the coastal parishes to adopt their digital flood insurance rate map was Tangipahoa Parish on July 22, 2010.

Floodplain administrators in each community have copies of the maps available for public viewing. Map information is available at www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/bfe. Additional information is also available at www.lamappingproject.com.

Mitigation Outreach

Since Katrina, mitigation outreach specialists have worked to help individuals and communities recognize the kinds of disasters they may face and identify what they can do to better protect themselves before a disaster strikes.

Such outreach efforts have taken place all over the state of Louisiana, with mitigation specialists participating in various community events, including local government meetings, neighborhood association meetings, home rebuilding expos and hurricane preparedness expos. As a result, tens of thousands of Louisiana residents are now better equipped to make decisions on how they can best prepare their properties today for what may come tomorrow.



Flood map information is available online for public viewing.



Mitigation specialists advise community members on how to best protect their homes.



FEMA mitigation employees meet to discuss flood maps.



Mitigation outreach is conducted at various locations, including home improvement stores.

Environmental and Historic Preservation

Given the distinct ecological and historical treasures that abound in Louisiana, the impacts of hurricanes Katrina and Rita were even more devastating to the state. As a result, necessary recovery work became extra challenging with the daunting task of safely and effectively rebuilding communities all while accounting for Louisiana’s natural and cultural attributes.

Regarding such recovery work, federal laws mandate that whenever federal funding is spent on a recovery project, environmental reviews, as guided by the National Environmental Policy Act, and historic reviews, as guided by the National Historic Preservation Act, are necessary to assess the project’s impacts on the environment and historic properties.

For these reasons—assisting Louisiana in her unparalleled recovery and abiding by federal mandates, FEMA assembled an Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) unit in the state to study each federally-funded recovery project and to complete a full EHP review for the benefit of FEMA’s applicants.

This EHP team is staffed by specialists in such fields as biology, environmental sciences, floodplains, archaeology, architecture, engineering, historic preservation and Tribal relations. Over the past five years, they have addressed a wide variety of concerns, including socio-economics, historic structures, archaeology, endangered species, wetlands, biological resources, water and air quality, hydrology, geology, soils, erosion and hazardous and toxic materials.

In many ways, their post-Katrina work has aided in the preservation of Louisiana’s environmental and historical resources, and while their efforts consist of many noteworthy EHP examples, the following are a few “lesser-known” projects that speak to discoveries and innovative EHP efforts during Louisiana's five-year recovery.

Val Reiss Park—Mitigation Banking

Flooding from Hurricane Katrina destroyed recreational areas and facilities throughout St. Bernard Parish. To meet the population changes following the storm, the parish elected to use FEMA public assistance grants to consolidate 32 recreational projects into one, centralized facility—Val Reiss Park. When completely finished, this innovative project will cover 33-acres of land, featuring walking paths, playgrounds, a multi-purpose building and a baseball quadriplex. Pre-Katrina, approximately half of this area had little to no development with natural vegetation dominating the landscape.



Construction of Val Reiss Park

While working with St. Bernard Parish to assist them in their Val Reiss Park expansion endeavor, FEMA EHP biologists assessed the previously untouched landscape and determined that it contained approximately one acre of non-jurisdictional defined wetlands. As a result of this finding, FEMA EHP led efforts in coordination with the parish, FEMA Public Assistance and High Point Mitigation Company, LLC, to lessen the impact on these wetlands by requesting a “mitigation banking” equivalent to the affected area.

Overall, the goal of mitigation banking is a “no net loss” of U.S. wetlands by providing funding so that another established wetland or aquatic resource area can be restored, enhanced or better preserved. In the case of the Val Reiss Park project, such mitigation banking was suggested as a way to compensate for the unavoidable impacts to the area’s wetlands.

Through this mitigation effort, St. Bernard Parish was able to proceed with the post-Katrina Val Reiss Park project, all the while off-setting detrimental effects to its natural environment.



Bottle Artifact



Pot Artifact



Plate Artifact

Los Isleños Artifacts

In lower St. Bernard, a historical community—Los Isleños—exists, preserving and promoting the culture and traditions of the Canary Islanders who immigrated to Louisiana in the late 1700s. The cultural infrastructure of this community was greatly affected by Hurricane Katrina, with 10 of its facilities, including its main museum and 200-year old Ducros Library, incurring storm surges of up to 12 feet. To date, \$1.5 million in FEMA public assistance grants have been obligated for the repair or replacement of these facilities.

Because this recovery project utilizes federal funding, FEMA EHP archaeologists monitored all ground-disturbing activities at the Los Isleños site. They helped conserve and protect this historically significant area while simultaneously upholding the construction schedule of the post-Katrina Los Isleños Complex. During this process, previously unknown artifacts were discovered, including historic ceramics, glass and metal representing house sites and support structures ranging from the late 1700s to the early 1900s. As a result of these findings, FEMA recorded this area as a new archaeological site with the State Historic Preservation Office. This site is currently eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and documents early Los Isleños culture and its subsequent human occupation.

The result of these findings is significant in that it provides evidence of the initial settlement and later growth of one of Louisiana's earliest communities. Additionally, it provides a direct, tangible link for modern Isleños descendants to their culture and history.

Historic Preservation Through Innovative Technology Use

Hurricane Katrina devastated thousands of historic homes throughout New Orleans, resulting in the single largest disaster affecting cultural resources in the United States since the National Historic Preservation Act's establishment in 1966.

As a result of this harsh reality, FEMA aimed to help safely rebuild New Orleans while recording information on her cultural assets before they disappeared. With this in mind, FEMA EHP employees decided to utilize geographic information system (GIS) technology while conducting necessary response and recovery operations to capture structural and historic information on private properties that were demolished in the city. In conjunction with these unparalleled efforts, a GIS-based inventory of various historic districts was created to counterbalance the overall loss of Katrina-damaged historic properties.

For public safety reasons, by the spring of 2009, thousands of hazardous residential structures in the greater New Orleans area were demolished with the assistance of FEMA funding. Since then, FEMA EHP employees have worked to educate the public and other interested parties on the GIS-inventory that was created during the process and the overarching historic preservation benefits of electronically documenting such assets prior to their demolitions. This information was also shared with the State Historic Preservation Office as well as the city of New Orleans' Historic District Landmarks Commission to update their records and to assist them with future planning. Electronically documenting these historic assets closely aligns with the goals of FEMA's EHP group in that it helps communities progress toward recovery while still taking historic preservation into account.

Historic Districts' Database



Thank You

Thank you—first and foremost to the people of Louisiana for not only standing strong in the face of adversity, but for rising to the unprecedented challenge of working tirelessly to rebuild your lives, your neighborhoods and the communities in which you live. From the resolute residents of this state to the passionate community leaders, their determination is what has fueled this recovery from the beginning and what continues to drive it forward toward completion.

Additionally, your spirit of resiliency is both astonishing and contagious in that it inspires us all on a daily basis to work together to assist your rebuilding efforts to our fullest capabilities and to help you reconstruct an even stronger post-Katrina Louisiana. As your federal partners in recovery, we at FEMA have had the pleasure of working alongside you for the past five years and the honor of witnessing your many recovery accomplishments first-hand. From ground breakings to grand openings, your lives are flourishing again with visible and viable signs abounding that all point to one main truth—the people of Louisiana are much stronger than that of Hurricane Katrina’s wrath.

Such remarkable Louisianans can also be found within our agency’s own local recovery office, for many of our FEMA co-workers also suffered direct losses from Hurricane Katrina. So, to those of you who wear FEMA’s badge and also carry the burden of being a Katrina victim, thank you for selflessly and dually working this recovery in both your professional and personal lives. You are dedicated professionals who represent a well trained and talented workforce.

Other selfless recovery workers who deserve recognition are the many non-profit organizations and faith-based groups who have, over the past five years, freely put the well-being of others first by providing crucial services to thousands across Louisiana. Unquestionably, the successes of this recovery would not be possible without your remarkable acts of kindness.

Lastly, our own mission to support Louisiana in her recovery would not be feasible if it were not for our state partners at the Louisiana Recovery Authority, the Office of Community Development and the Louisiana Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. Thank you for working jointly with us to ensure Louisiana’s full recovery.

Sincerely,

Your Friends at FEMA



Recovery in Progress—2010 Highlights



**St. Bernard Parish:
Reggio Pump Station Grand Opening**



**Cameron Parish:
J.P. Constance Memorial Fire Station
Ribbon Cutting**



**St. Bernard Parish:
Port, Harbor & Terminal District Admin. &
Security Complex Ribbon Cutting**



**St. Bernard Parish:
Mosquito Control Administration Building
Ground Breaking**



**Jefferson Parish:
Terrytown Elementary Ground Breaking**



**East Baton Rouge Parish:
Louisiana Business Emergency
Operations Center Opening**



**Plaquemines Parish:
Buras Auditorium Dedication**



**Orleans Parish:
Mahalia Jackson Early Childhood & Family
Learning Center Grand Opening**



**St. Bernard Parish:
Frederick J. Sigur Civic Center
Grand Opening**



**Orleans Parish:
City Park Sculpture Garden Grand Opening**



**Orleans Parish:
Holy Cross School Grand Opening**



**St. Bernard Parish:
Aycock Barn/Open Air Seafood
Market Ground Breaking**



**Orleans Parish:
Greater Gentilly High School Dedication**



**Orleans Parish:
Criminal Sheriff's Office Templeman I & II
Demolition**



**Orleans Parish:
Work/Life Center Dedication**



**Orleans Parish:
Andrew Wilson Elementary School
Ribbon Cutting**



**Orleans Parish:
Smith Library Ground Breaking**



**Cameron Parish:
School Board
Administration Building
Grand Opening**

